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Message Text

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S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 MOSCOW 10204

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PARM, SHUM, UR, US
SUBJECT: KORNIYENKO-SONNENFELDT CONVERSATION

SUMMARY: DURING CALL ON DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER KORNIYENKO JULY 14 (ALONE AT HIS REQUEST), FORMER DEPARTMENT COUNSELOR SONNENFELDT DISCUSSED THE APPROACH OF THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION, THE U.S. ATTITUDE TOWARD HUMAN RIGHTS AND SEVERAL SALT ISSUES. END SUMMARY

1. DURING A BRIEF STOPOVER IN MOSCOW FOLLOWING PARTICIPATION IN THE DARTMOUTH CONFERENCE IN LATVIA, FORMER DEPARTMENT COUNSELOR HELMUT SONNELFELDT CALLED ON DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER KORNIYENKO FOR A GENERAL DISCUSSION OF U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS. THE FOLLOWING IS A SUMMARY OF THE CONVERSATION, AS RELAYED BY SONNELFELDT TO THE AMBASSADOR. THE SUMMARY WAS PREPARED FOLLOWING SONNELFELDT'S DEPARTURE FROM MOSCOW AND HAS NOT BEEN CLEARED BY HIM.

2. CARTER ADMINISTRATION:

KORNIYENKO LED OFF THE DISCUSSION BY SAYING THAT THE SOVIETS ARE PREPLEXED BY THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION. HE ASKED WHAT SORT OF PERSON THE PRESIDENT REALLY IS. SONNENFELDT REPLIED THAT HE SHOULD BE UNDERSTOOD IN TERMS

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OF THE AMERICAN POLITICAL TRADITION: HE IS A SOUTHERN POLITICIAN, WHICH ACCOUNTS FOR SOME TRAITS, IS BASICALLY CONSERVATIVE IN ECONOMIC TERMS (WHICH INTER ALIA MAKES SYMPATHETIC TO CONTROLLING DEFENSE EXPENDITURES), IS IDEALISTIC, AND IS A FORMER NAVAL OFFICER AND ENGINEER WHO UNDERSTANDS TECHNICAL ISSUES AND CAN BE EXPECTED TO SUPPORT AN ADEQUATE DEFENSE POSTURE. ALL OF THESE

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TENDENCIES, SONNENFELDT ADDED, ARE VERY MUCH A PART OF
THE AMERICAN POLITICAL TRADITION.

3. KORNIYENKO THEN SAID THAT THE SOVIETS ARE HAVING
TROUBLE SORTING OUT WHO IS DOING WHAT IN THE NEW ADMINISTRATION
AND PARTICULARLY, HOW THE LINES OF AUTHORITY RUN. SONNENFELDT
COMMENTED THAT IT IS CHARACTERISTIC OF DEMOCRATIC ADMINISTRATIONS
TO DRAW MANY TALENTED PEOPLE INTO THE ADMINISTRATION FROM
VARIOUS WALKS OF LIFE. THE SOVIETS WOULD BE BEST ADVISED IF
THEY WISH TO GET A FIX ON U.S. POLICY, TO LISTEN PRIMARILY
TO THE PRESIDENT AND TO HIS DESIGNATED OFFICIALS. HE
ALSO COMMENTED THAT THE SOVIETS WOULD BE WELL ADVISED
TO DEVELOP A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE CARTER
ADMINISTRATION QUICKLY SINCE THEY ARE LIKELY TO BE DEALING
WITH IT FOR EIGHT YEARS. SINCE HE THINKS BETTER UNDER-
STANDING IS IMPORTANT, HE WAS DISAPPOINTED IN THE SOVIET
REACTIONS TO PROPOSALS FOR AN EARLY "GET ACQUAINTED SUMMIT."

4. IN SPEAKING OF PERSONS IN THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION,
KORIYENKO REFERRED TO BREZEZINSKI AS ONE WHOM THE SOVIETS
CONSIDERED "TOO IDEOLOGICAL" IN HIS APPROACH. SONNENFELDT
WARNED HIM AGAINST THE SOVIET HABIT OF CATEGORIZING
PEOPLE RIGIDLY, AND POINTED OUT THAT BREZEZINSKI HAD DONE
HIS EARLY SCHOLARLY WORK ON THE STRUCTURE OF TOTALITARIAN
SOCIETIES, JUST AS KISSINGER HAD DONE HIS ON THE HISTORY
OF DIPLOMATIC INTERCHANGE. KORNIYENKO BROADENED HIS COMMENT
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TO SAY THAT THERE IS FEAR HERE THAT THE NEW ADMINISTRATION
IS MORE IDEOLOGICAL AND LESS PRAGMATIC THAN THE PREVIOUS
ONES. SONNENFELDT SAID THAT ALTHOUGH THE STYLES DIFFER,
BOTH STRAINS HAVE BEEN PRESENT IN ALL RECENT ADMINISTRATIONS
-- AND INDEED THROUGHOUT AMERICAN HISTORY.

5. HUMAN RIGHTS: KORNIYENKO REFERRED TO CARTER'S HUMAN
RIGHTS POLICIES AS THE CAUSE OF CONSIDERABLE BEWILDERMENT
HERE, AND CITED IN PARTICULAR THE LETTER TO SAKHAROV, WHICH
WAS DELIVERED SHORTLY AFTER SAKHAROV HAD CHARGED THE KGB WITH
THE SUBWAY BOMBINGS IN MOSCOW; THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER AT
THIS TIME SEEMED AN IMPLICIT ENDORSEMENT OF SAKHAROV'S
CHARGES. SONNELFELDT SAID THAT THE NIXON AND FORD
ADMINISTRATIONS BY NO MEANS IGNORED HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES -
AS KORNIYENKO WELL KNEW - ALTHOUGH THEY DEALT WITH THEM
PRIMARILY BY QUIET DIPLOMACY. CARTER HAD PRESUMABLY
SENSED THAT THIS MANNER OF HANDLING HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES WAS
NOT APPRECIATED BY THE AMERICAN PUBLIC, AND THIS INDUCED
HIM TO TAKE A MORE OPEN STANCE. IN ESSENCE, HOWEVER, THE
POLICIES WERE NOT RADICALLY DIFFERENT, AND THIS THEME IS
A NORMAL ONE FOR AMERICAN DIPLOMACY. AS FAF AS THE LETTER
TO SAKHAROV IS CONCERNED, THIS IS NOW PAST AND THERE

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HAS BEEN NO REPEAT, AND SONNENFELDT ADVISED KORNIYENKO TO
LOOK TO THE FUTURE RATHER THAN DWELLING UPON INCIDENTS OF
THE PAST.

6. KORNIYENKO COMMENTED THAT ONE REASON THE SOVIETS HAVE
DIFFICULTY ACCEPTING THE PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS ON HUMAN
RIGHTS AT FACE VALUE IS THAT CARTER SEEMS TO BE DOING
NOTHING IN REGARD TO HUMAN RIGHTS INSIDE THE UNITED STATES.
SONNENFELDT SAID HE FELT THAT THIS IS A FALSE PICTURE. IT
IS, OR COURSE, MORE DIFFICULT TO MAKE CHANGES INTERNALLY
THAN TO COMMENT ON THE PROBLEMS OF OTHER BECAUSE DOMESTIC
CHANGE INVOLVES INTRICATE NEGOTIATION WITH MANY INTEREST GROUPS.
HOWEVER, HE FELT THAT MANY THINGS ARE BEING DONE, AND HE
SUGGESTED THAT ONE OF THE SOVIET INSTITUTES BE CHARGED WITH
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DOING A FACTUAL STUDY ON JUST THIS SUBJECT, SINCE HE FELT THAT
IT WOULD SHOW THAT HUMAN RIGHTS WITHIN THE U.S. ARE BEING
GIVEN ATTENTION BY THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION.

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7. SALT AND HUMAN RIGHTS:

KORNIYENKO SAID THAT, WHILE IN A GENERAL SENSE, THE DISPUTE
OVER HUMAN RIGHTS HAD DAMAGED THE STMOSPHERE OF U.S.-SOVIET
RELATIONS, THIS HAD NOT AFFECTED THE SOVIET DECISIONS ON
SALT IN ANY SUBSTANTIAL MANNER. AS HE PUT IT, THE U.S.
MARCH PROPOSALS WOULD HAVE BEEN REJECTED EVEN IF NOTHING

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HAD BEEN SAID ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS; WHEREAS "GOOD" U.S. PROPOSALS ON SALT WOULD HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED EVEN IF THE HUMAN RIGHTS POLEMIC HAD BEEN MORE INTENSE. SONNENFELDT SAID THAT HIS PERCEPTION OF THE ATTITUDE ON OUR SIDE IS SIMILAR, EXCEPT THAT HE THOUGHT THAT THE HUMAN RIGHTS DISPUTE HAD IN FACT EXERCISED A GREATER INFLUENCE ON THE THINKING OF BOTH SIDES THAN THEY THEMSELVES PERHAPS REALIZED.

8. SALT:

AS THE COVERSATION TURNED TO SALT, SONNENFELDT OBSERVED THAT THE SOVIETS MUST BE PREPARED TO MAKE PROPOSALS OF THEIR OWN, AND NOT EXPECT THAT THEY CAN FORCE US TO CHANGE OUR POSITION BY WAITING. HE SAID THAT HE HAD NO DOUBT THAT, IN THE ABSENCE OF A SALT-II AGREEMENT, PRESIDENT CARTER WOULD BE ABLE TO SECURE SUPPORT FOR WHATEVER STRATEGIC WEAPONS EXPENDITURES SEEMED NECESSARY. THEREFORE, THE SOVIETS SHOULD NOT PIN THEIR HOPES ON STIMULATING DOMESTIC

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OPPOSITION TO THE PRESIDENT'S POLICIES; ALTHOUGH AN AMERICAN PRESIDENT ALWAYS HAS CRITICS, CARTER IS NOT UNDER HEAVY PRESSURE TO MDIFY HIS PROPOSALS.

9. SONNENFELDT EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT THE SOVIETS WERE INTERPRETING THE PRESIDENT'S B-1 DECISION SO NEGATIVDLY, SAYING THA HE HOPED THEIR PRIVATE ASSESSMENT WAS MORE FAVORABLE THAN THEIR PUBLIC COMMENTS. KORNIYENKO REFERRED TO SOVIET CONCERN OVER THE CRUISE MISSILE, AND SAID THAT SOVIETS COULD NOT BE EXPECTED TO ACCEPT A PROPOSAL WHICH DOES NOT COUNT BOMBERS CARRYING ALCM'S IN THE MIRV CEILING. (THIS WAS CITED AS ONE EXAMPLE OF "ONE-SIDED" U.S. APPROACH.) SONNENFELDT POINTED OUT THAT WE ARE NOW FACED WITH NEW SITUATION SINCE THE PRESIDENT'S DECISION ON THE B-1: DURING 1975 AND 1976 FORD ADMINISTRATION HAD OFFERED TO COUNT BOMBERS WITH CRUISE MISSILES WITHIN THE MIRV CEILING (AS PART OF A PACKAGE NOT ACCEPTED BY SOVIETS) ON ASSUMPTION THAT WE WOULD HAVE B-1 AND CRUISE MISSILES. THE B-1 IS A PENETRATION BOMBER, IN RESPONSE TO THE HEAVY SOVIET AIR DEFENSE SYSTEM, AND THE CRUISE MISSILES WERE VIEWED AS HAVING A ROLE OF AIR DEFENSE SUPPRESSION. HOWEVER, MATTERS HAVE NOW CHANGED. WITHOUT THE B-1, THE CRUISE MISSILES THEMSELVES BECOME THE PENETRATION WEAPON SINCE THE BOMBERS MUST STAND OFF 1000 KM OR SO FROM SOVIET BORDERS.

10. SONNENFELDT ASKED HOW THE SOVIETS VIEWED MOBILE MISSILES. KORNIYENKO REPLIED THAT THEY ARE PREPARED TO BAN THEM IF U.S. IS.

11. KORNIYENKO EXPRESSED INCOMPREHENSION OF THE U.S.

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POSITION REGARDING THE SS-20, IMPLYING THAT THE QUESTIONS
U.S. RAISED WERE PRETEXTS AND OBSTRUCTIVE. SONNENFELDT
POINTED OUT THAT THEE IS GENUINE CONCERN AMONG SOME
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EXPERTS - AND NOT EXCLUSIVELY THE HAWKS - ABOUT THE
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SS-20 ITSELF (THEY FALL WITHIN A
GRAY AREA WITH SOME ARGUABLY STRATEGIC CHARACTERISTICS) AS
WELL AS OVER THE POSSIBILITY OF QUICKLY ADDING A THIRD
STAGE - WHICH EVEN MORE WORRY ABOUT. HE THEREFORE
CONSIDERED U.S. COMMENTS GENUINE AND NOT CONTRIVED.
SONNENFELDT ALSO ADDED THAT IT IS MOST IMPORTANT FOR THE
SOVIETS NOT TO ADOPT CONCEALMENT METHODS FOR THEIR TESTING,
SINCE THE UNCERTAINTIES WHICH THESE PRODUCE ON OUR SIDE
MILITATE AGAINST RESOLUTION OF THESE PROBLEMS.

12. SOVIET MISTAKES:

SINCE KORNIYENKO CONSISTENTLY IMPLIED THAT MOST PROBLEMS IN
U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS RELATE TO THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION,
SONNENFELDT POINTED OUT THAT MANY DID NOT ARISE JUST
SINCE JANUARY 20, 1977. HE CITED THE FOLLOWING AS EARLIER
SOVIET MISTAKES WHICH HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE PRESENT
SITUATION:

A. SOVIET ACTION IN ANGOLA, IN VIOLATION OF 1972
DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES;

B. MEAGER IMPLEMENTATION OF HELSINKI FINAL ACT AND
THE WAY THE WHOLE MATTER WAS HANDLED; AND

C. THE UNEXPECTED SOVIET ARMS BUILD-UP OVER THE PAST
FEW YEARS.

TO THE LATTER, KORNIYENKO PROTESTED THAT THE U.S. MUST HAVE
DISCOUNTED SUBSEQUENT SOVIET DEVELOPMENTS WHEN THE 1972 SALT
AGREEMENT WAS CONCLUDED. SONNENFELDT REPLIED THAT HE COULD
HONESTLY STATE THAT, WHEN THE 1972 AGREEMENTS WERE
NEGOTIATED HERE, NONE OF THE U.S. TEAM THOUGHT THAT THE
SOVIETS WOULD REPLACE THE SS-11 WITH SOMETHING VERY CLOSE TO
A HEAVY MISSILE LIKE THE SS-18, NOR DID THEY ANTICIPATE THE
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RAPID SOVIET BUILD-UP OF THE AIR DEFENSE SYSTEM. HE WAS NOT
SUGGESTING THAT ANYTHING THE SOVIETS HAD DONE WAS IN VIOLATION
OF THE LETTER OF THE SALT AGREEMENTS, BUT THAT THESE BUILD-UPS

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HAD GENUINELY NOT BEEN ANTICIPATED, AND TO SOME DEGREE,
CONGRESS WAS ALSO MISLED DURING THE RATIFICATION HEARINGS.
HE THEREFORE CONSIDERS THE CURRENT U.S. PROPOSALS TO REDUCE
THE NUMBER OF HEAVY MISSILES A CONSEQUENCE, AT LEAST IN PART,
OF THE WAY THE SOVIETS CONTINUED TO INTRODUCE RELATIVELY
HEAVY MISSILES FOLLOWING THE SALT-I AGREEMENT.

13. IN CONCLUSION, SONNENFELDT OBSERVED THAT IF THE SOVIETS
FIND THE PRESENT SITUATION DIFFICULT, THEY SHOULD RECOGNIZE
THAT THEY SHOULD HAVE BEEN MORE FORTHCOMING TO REGARD TO
U.S. PROPOSALS IN 1975 AND 1976. IF THEY HAD BEEN, AN AGREEMENT
WOULD PROBABLY HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE AT THAT TIME. AS IT IS
NOW, THEY MUST ADJUST THEIR POSITION TO CURRENT REALITIES
AND NOT TRY TO FORCE A CHANGE IN THE U.S. PROPOSALS WITHOUT
CONCRETE PROPOSALS O THEIR OWN. WHILE STRESSING HE WAS NOT
PRIVY TO CURRENT ADMINISTRATION THINKING, SONNENFELDT THOUGHT
THE IDEA OF CONCLUDING AN AGREEMENT WITH THE VLADIVOSTOK NUMBERS,
BUT DEFERRING THE DIFFICULT QUESTIONS, HAD MERIT AND SHOULD
BE GIVEN MORE CONSIDERATION.
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